



In Search of El dorado

A daily journal of my travels and adventures in my.....Search for Eldorado

Hello to Family & Friends

Monday, February 22nd 2021 Day 36



My mission today is to visit.....missions. But first, I found an empty parking lot last night from which a policeman chased me at about midnight. He said the park closes at sundown and laughed when I said "you mean I can't spend the night here?" I finished the newsletter and drove to a different WalMart. This one has, ROW 19 RV's, and a couple others parked here so I think it will be ok.

This morning I visited WalMart and actually found the produce shelves relatively full. However, bakery was scarce, and I could count the total number of meat packages on ten fingers. I don't even think there was a meat department employee in the store.

Back to my mission....there are four San Antonio missions other than the Alamo, so let's get started. I drove to the first one which was not too far away.

San Antonio Missions

The missions of San Antonio were far more than just churches, they were communities. Each was a fortified village, with its own church, farm, and ranch. Here, Franciscan friars gathered native peoples, converted them to Catholicism, taught them to live as Spaniards, and helped maintain Spanish control over the Texas frontier.

Outside the walls were fertile fields where one quart of seed yielded six bushels of corn at harvest. A prosperous ranch 25 miles distant raised over 3,500 sheep and 3,000 cattle. Inside the mission, workshops produced cured hides, cloth, wooden articles, and ironwares.

Hub of Commerce

Workshops and storerooms clustered around this small courtyard bustled with activity—especially when a mule train arrived. Books, fabrics, hats, pots, griddles, and iron bars hauled from distant Mexico City were unpacked here and stored away. Then the fruits of mission enterprises—hides, tallow, and foodstuffs—were loaded onto the mules for export.

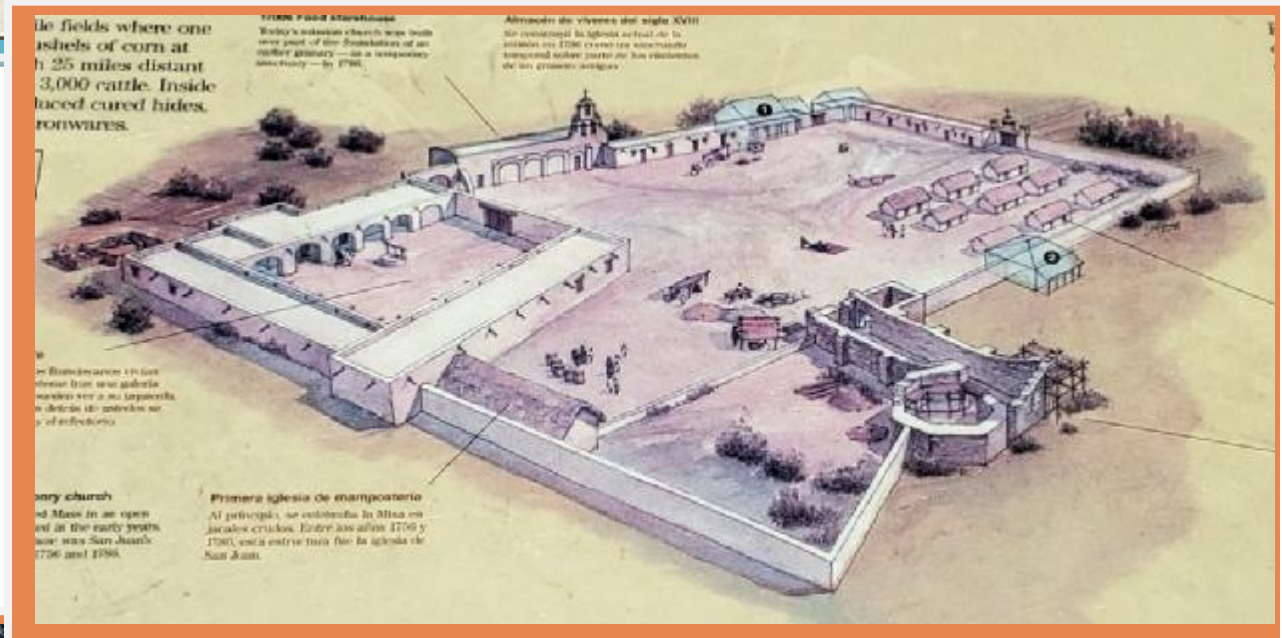
Basically this courtyard is surrounded by walls. These were good sized open areas.



Mission San Juan

Only a fraction of the buildings of the self-sustaining community that was Mission San Juan can still be seen above ground today. Archeology and old Spanish records provide clues to help us imagine this settlement of as many as 200 souls.

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This is the entry portal to the courtyard. Everyone had to be checked in and allowed to pass.



A Thoughtful Tribute

This is an interesting story from inside the church.

Franciscan missionaries from the Apostolic College of Santa Cruz de Queretaro in 1716 founded San Jose de los Nazonis in the pine forests of east Texas. Fifteen years later, left without adequate military protection, they moved the mission to the east bank of the Rio San Antonio. To avoid possible confusion with another establishment in the vicinity, the Franciscans in 1731 renamed the transferred mission San Juan Capistrano.

Giovanni di Capistrano (1386-1456), lawyer, public official, Franciscan priest, teacher, and missionary, participated in the Battle of Nandorfehervar (now Belgrade), Hungary. Sent by the Vatican as spiritual advisor to the defense forces led by General Janos Hunyady, the fearless friar, confronted by a serious emergency, accepted command of a large contingent of the Christian army. Before the battle actually began, Pope Calixtus III, on June 29, 1456, ordered church bells rung at noon throughout Christendom to encourage the defenders of Nandorfehervar to persevere.

A few months later, to the great relief of Europe, in halting the Turkish invaders at the southern frontier of Hungary, the Christian warriors safeguarded the rest of the continent from further assault. To the Hungarians, the daily ringing of church bells represented the victory at Nandorfehervar, a commemoration later taught to all school children.

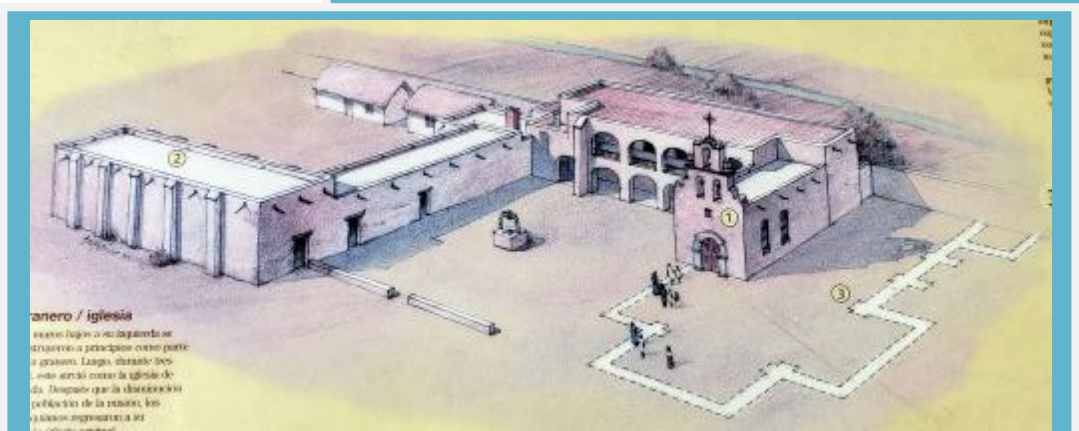
Shortly after the battle, General Hunyady and Fray Capistrano died, victims of a scourging plague. A grateful nation promptly acknowledged Janos Hunyady as a Hungarian hero. Two centuries later, in 1690, the Vatican canonized Juan De Capistrano. At Mission San Juan Capistrano, loose strands of cultural history have intertwined in thoughtful reflection.

Left - Inside the church. No mass going on this time.

When the River Walk was extended eight miles south, it was designed to include four of the missions along the San Antonio River that could be hiked or biked or driven to. Since I had not been on the bike for awhile I decided to take in the closest one upon my trusty electric steed.



Building Sanctuaries



1 Sacristy

Originally built to be just a **sacristy**, a small room where priests prepare for Mass, this has been Espada's sanctuary for over 200 years.

In the 19th century, the church fell into disrepair. A French parish priest, Reverend Francis Bouchu, reconstructed it, adding the transepts you see today. The façade with its curious door is original.

1740–1773, 1777–today



This is the curious door



Alright, only two more missions to go, three if you count The Alamo. Yeah, I've had enough also. But a couple miles down the path is the Espada Dam, which one report called the most picturesque spot on the River Walk. It's a nice paved trail all the way with an info plaque here and there and possible some wildlife.



Do you count turkey vultures enjoying a meal, wildlife? No? How about the turtle below that climbed onto the rock to get a little sunshine? He had very little of that last week.



Espada Acequia and Aqueduct

THE ESPADA ACEQUIA WAS PART OF AN EXTENSIVE SYSTEM of hand-dug irrigation ditches built by Spanish settlers to deliver water from the San Antonio River and San Pedro Creek to residents of San Antonio de Bexar and nearby missionary-led communities. Construction of the acequia began soon after Mission Espada was established in 1731. A stone dam about three miles upstream diverted water from the San Antonio River into the ditch that meandered through farmlands (*labores*) where crops were grown and livestock was pastured.

Water flowed to more distant fields through side channels (*desagues*) and a stone aqueduct was built to carry the acequia across Piedras Creek. The acequia continued to provide water to area farmers after Mission Espada and surrounding lands were transferred to the community beginning in 1793. After the acequia fell into disrepair, adjoining property owners organized the Espada Ditch Company in 1894 to restore and maintain the channel. Today, the Espada dam, acequia and aqueduct still provide water to area fields just as they did beginning in the early eighteenth century. 🐢

Obviously, this portion of the Acequia has been redone with modern methods, but read the tiles below (which was a really cool way to do it in my opinion) and you will most likely be as amazed as I was at the longevity of early construction methods.



ESPADA DAM

THIS, THE OLDEST CONTINUOUSLY-USED SPANISH BUILT DIVERSION DAM IN TEXAS, HAS PROVIDED IRRIGATION WATER SINCE ITS CONSTRUCTION SOMETIME BETWEEN 1731 AND 1745. THE DAM ORIGINALLY 270 FEET LONG, IS BUILT ON A NATURAL ROCK FOUNDATION. A PORTION OF THE EAST WING IS NOW COVERED BY THE NEARBY FLOOD CONTROL LEVEE. DESPITE THE REVERSE BUTTRESS MAKING AN ANGULAR TURN AT THE CENTER OF THE CHANNEL THE DAM HAS WITHSTOOD MANY YEARS OF DESTRUCTIVE FLOODS WITH ONLY MINOR REPAIRS REQUIRED TO MAINTAIN ITS SOUND CONDITION. THE 8 FOOT TALL STRUCTURE DIVERTS APPROXIMATELY 4500 GALLONS OF WATER PER MINUTE INTO THE 4 MILE LONG IRRIGATION DITCH KNOWN AS "ACEQUIA DE ESPADA". BY GRAVITY FLOW THE ACEQUIA PROVIDES IRRIGATION WATER FOR 400 ACRES OF LAND IN THE VICINITY OF MISSION SAN FRANCISCO DE LA ESPADA. THE MOUTH OF THE ACEQUIA MAY BE SEEN ON THE OPPOSITE BANK OF THE RIVER JUST UPSTREAM FROM THE DAM. THE DAM AND IRRIGATION SYSTEM WAS ENGINEERED BY FRANCISCAN MISSIONARIES AND CONSTRUCTED BY INDIAN CONVERTS, A REMARKABLE FEAT AT THAT TIME.

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MISSION SAN FRANCISCO DE LA ESPADA

ACEQUIA DE ESPADA

SAN ANTONIO RIVER AUTHORITY

OLD DAM

APRIL 26 1966

OLD RIVER



This dam is almost 300 years old.

Below is the modern dam with a flood control area.



KENNEDY MEMORIAL TREE
THIS THORNLESS MORAIN HONEYLOCUST FROM THE
KENNEDY ESTATE AT HYANNISPORT, MASSACHUSETTS
WAS PRESENTED TO THE SAN ANTONIO RIVER AUTHORITY
THROUGH THE EFFORTS OF SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY
AND WAS PLANTED ON APRIL 24, 1966 IN MEMORY OF
JOHN F. KENNEDY
35th president of the united states of america



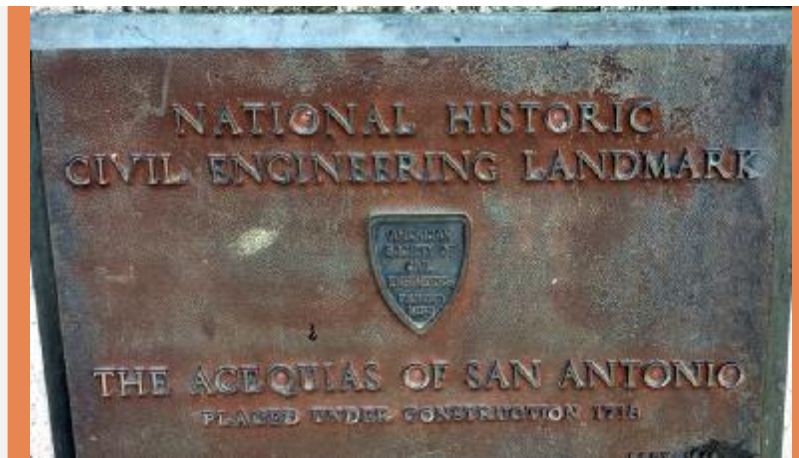
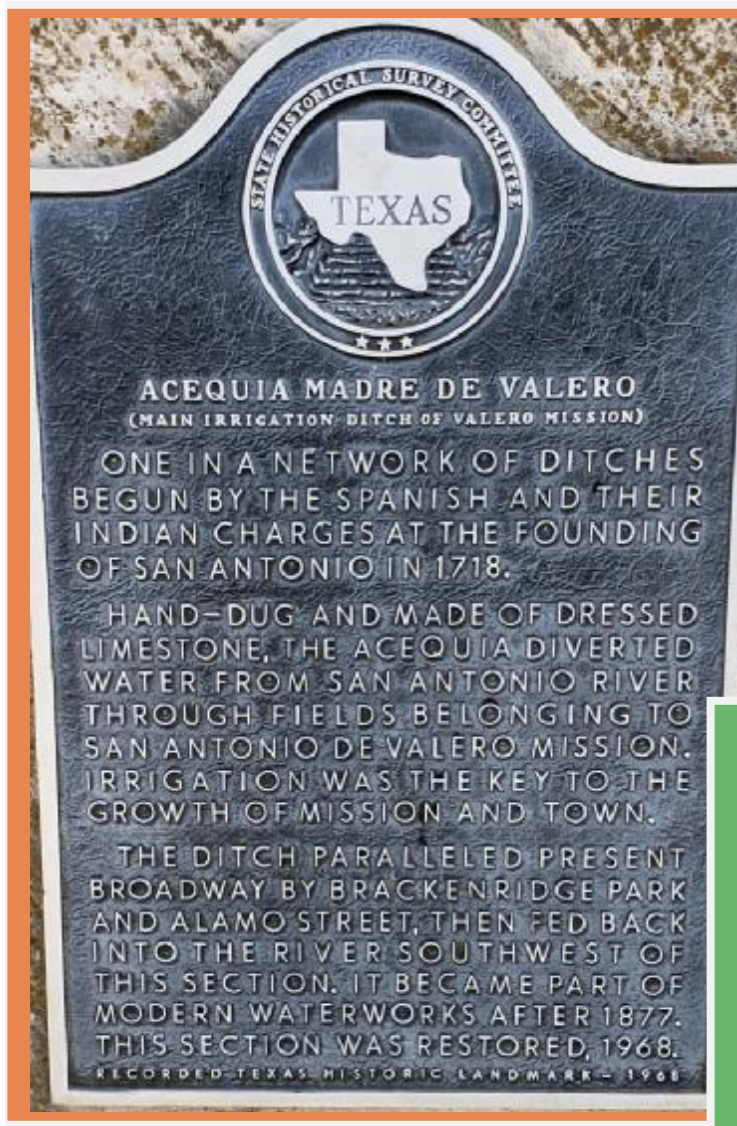
Berg's Mill Community



THE SAN ANTONIO RIVER PROVIDED POWER for mills that lined its banks from the headwater springs north of town to Mission Espada, a short distance south of here. Several mills built near this site, beginning in the middle 1800s, became the center of a small community known as Berg's Mill for millers Henry and Louis Berg. After the Berg brothers lost their wool mill and cotton gin to foreclosure in 1889, the buildings were leased to Gustave Hellemans and the settlement was briefly called Hellemans. The area's mills closed by the 1920s as a result of drought, devastating floods, economic downturns and competition. The flowing river was then used to power two small hydroelectric plants, one built on the foundation of the Berg brothers' mill. The Berg's Mill community boasted a railroad station, post office, grocery store, movie theater and school in the early 1930s. The population dwindled to fewer than one hundred residents by 1940, and within a few years Berg's Mill was no longer shown on area maps. Today a single stone ruin is the only reminder of the long milling history of the community still known informally as Berg's Mill. 🐾

In eighty short years an entire town just disappears. Where did all those buildings go to? I'm pretty sure they didn't use the same construction methods as the Spanish did at the missions, with the exception of this one remaining building, otherwise they would probably still be here.

I returned to the RV and started down the driving portion of the Mission Trail. After stopping for lunch at a nice overlook of the river I almost drove right under a low bridge. Ten feet five inches of clearance and the RV is eleven foot one. There was no warning from the RV system about a low clearance. Fortunately I caught it in time and was able to back up and get on a different road. This ruined my leisurely drive to Hemisfair Park and put me back on the highway. There was no one in the parking kiosk when I pulled up so I asked a policewomen parked just inside the lot. She said they don't allow tow trucks in here, but that I should pay at the Tower ticket window. The ticket lady told me the kiosk is usually manned by 2:30.



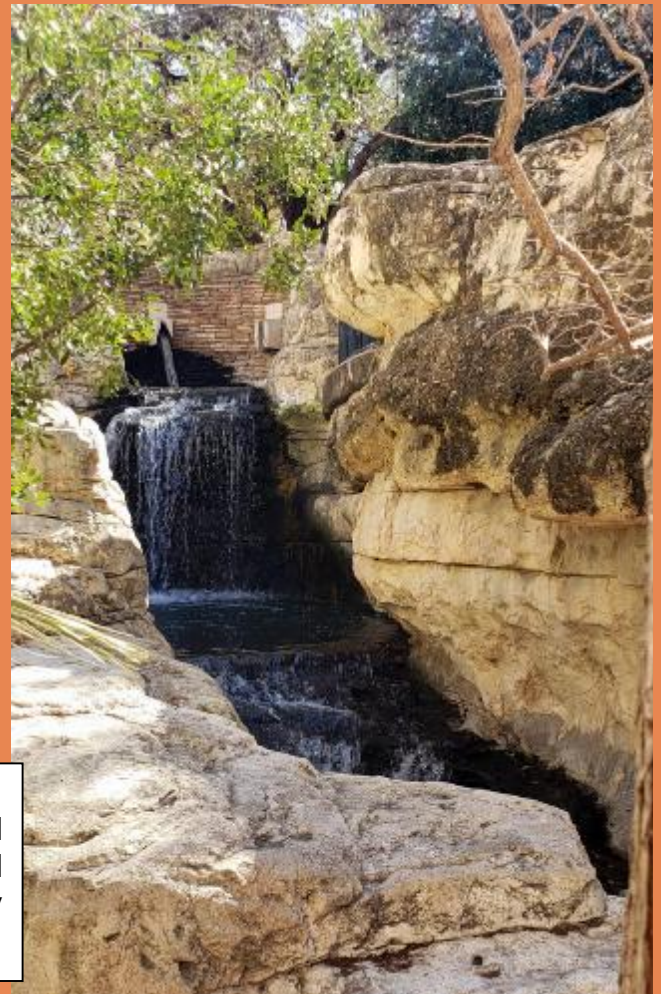
My walk around the Hemisfair grounds brought me to this display, the start of the Acequia. More a piece of artwork than the real McCoy.



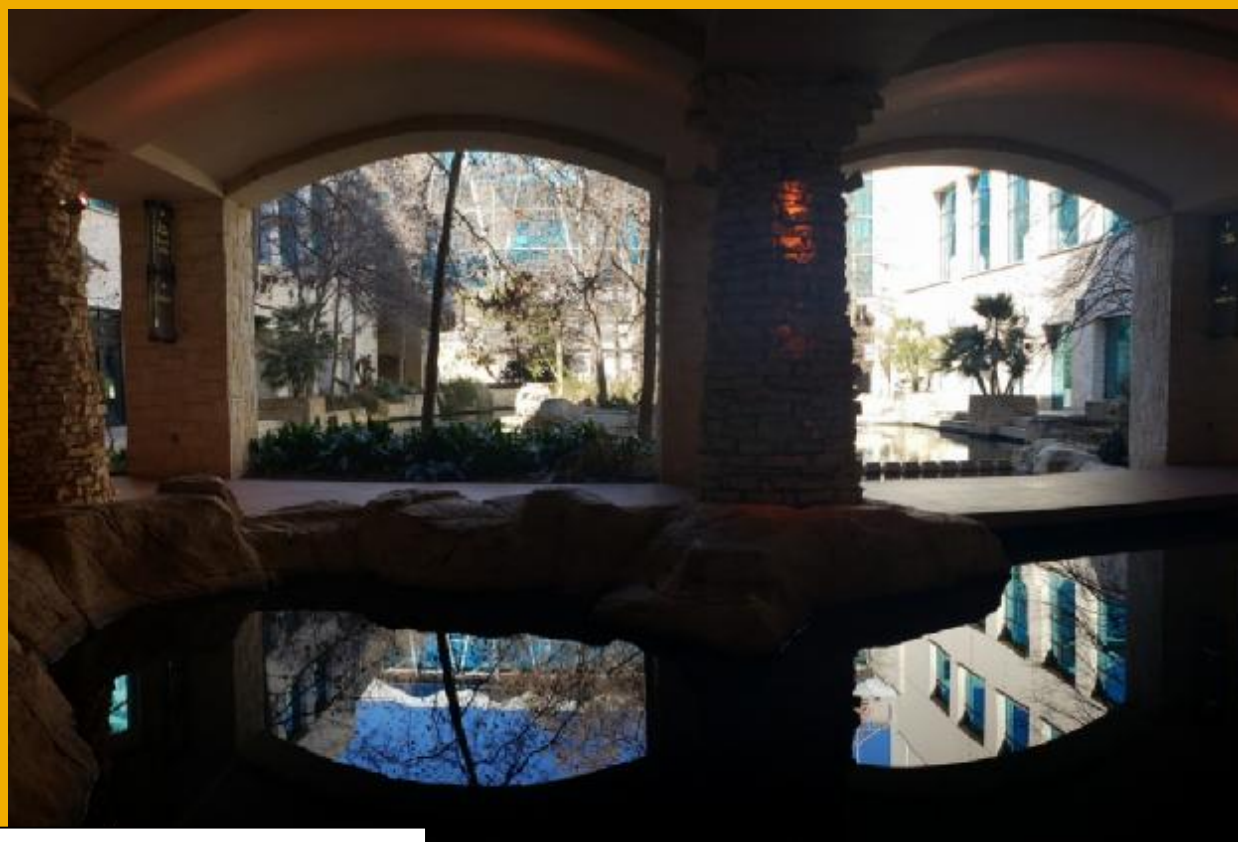
Yanaguana Garden

The garden is a play area for kids. I didn't really want to be found as a single old man taking pictures of kiddies, so I refrained from using the camera.

With very little left to see up here I headed to the River Walk once again. There is an area called 'The Grotto' which my research found interesting. And I was right.



I love the sound of rushing water, waterfalls, rapids, babbling brooks, I could listen to them all day long. I also like the hidden nooks and crannies that are hard to find, most likely because they are also usually empty of crowds.



The light was right for this one.

I walked through the River Center shopping mall, had a frozen yogurt, walked through the Menger Hotel and met up with Teddy out front by the Alamo.

ROUGH RIDER, PRESIDENT AND CONSERVATIONIST
TEDDY ROOSEVELT, JR.
1858-1919

THEODORE ROOSEVELT, JR., AMERICAN STATESMAN, ADVENTURER, AND CONSERVATIONIST, IS GENERALLY RANKED AS ONE OF THE FIVE BEST PRESIDENTS OF THE UNITED STATES.

WITH THE BEGINNING OF THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR IN APRIL 1898, ROOSEVELT RESIGNED AS ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY, AND ALONG WITH ARMY COLONEL LEONARD WOOD, FORMED THE FIRST US VOLUNTEER CAVALRY REGIMENT. THE REGIMENT TRAINED IN SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS, AND STRATEGIZED FOR THE WAR IN THE MENGER HOTEL BAR. THE REGIMENT WAS DIVERSE, INCLUDING COWBOYS, RANCHERS AND IVY LEAGUE ATHLETES, AND BECAME KNOWN AS THE "ROUGH RIDERS".

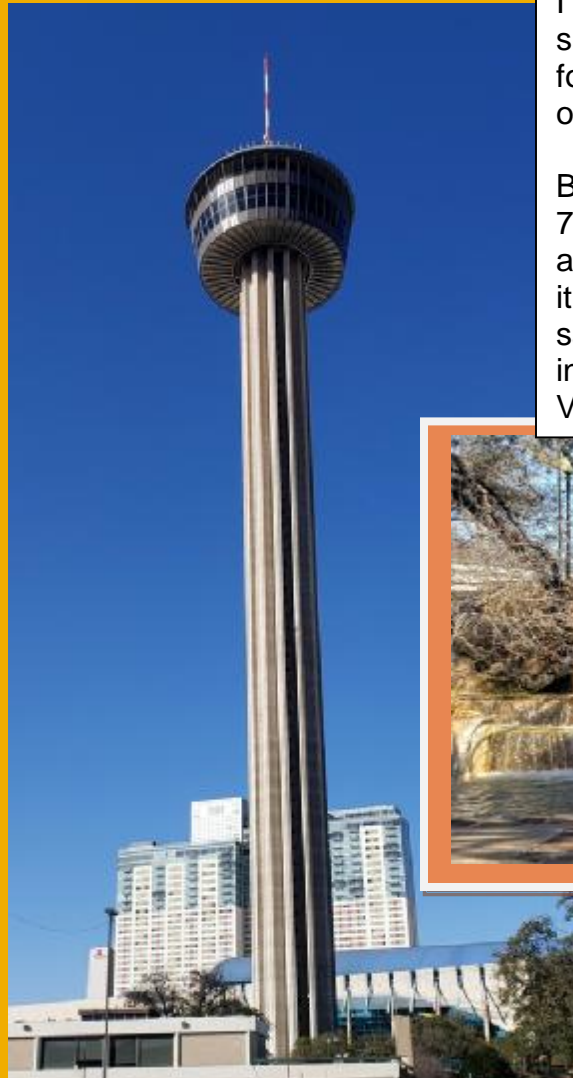
UNDER ROOSEVELT'S LEADERSHIP, THE ROUGH RIDERS BECAME FAMOUS FOR THE CHARGE UP KETTLE HILL IN CUBA ON JULY 1, 1898. ROOSEVELT ALWAYS RECALLED THE BATTLE OF KETTLE HILL AS "THE GREAT DAY OF MY LIFE" AND "MY CROWDED HOUR". IN 2001, ROOSEVELT WAS POSTHUMOUSLY AWARDED THE MEDAL OF HONOR FOR HIS ACTIONS.

ROOSEVELT SERVED AS THE 26TH PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, 1901 TO 1909. HE BECAME PRESIDENT IN SEPTEMBER 1901 AT AGE 42 FOLLOWING PRESIDENT MCKINLEY'S ASSASSINATION, AND REMAINS THE YOUNGEST PERSON TO BECOME PRESIDENT. HE BROKERED THE END OF THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR, WINNING HIM THE 1906 NOBEL PEACE PRIZE. OFTEN CALLED "THE CONSERVATION PRESIDENT," ROOSEVELT ESTABLISHED 150 NATIONAL FORESTS, 51 FEDERAL BIRD RESERVES, 4 NATIONAL GAME PRESERVES, 5 NATIONAL PARKS AND 18 NATIONAL MONUMENTS ON OVER 230 MILLION ACRES OF PUBLIC LAND. HIS FACE IS DEPICTED ON MOUNT RUSHMORE, ALONGSIDE THOSE OF WASHINGTON, JEFFERSON AND LINCOLN.

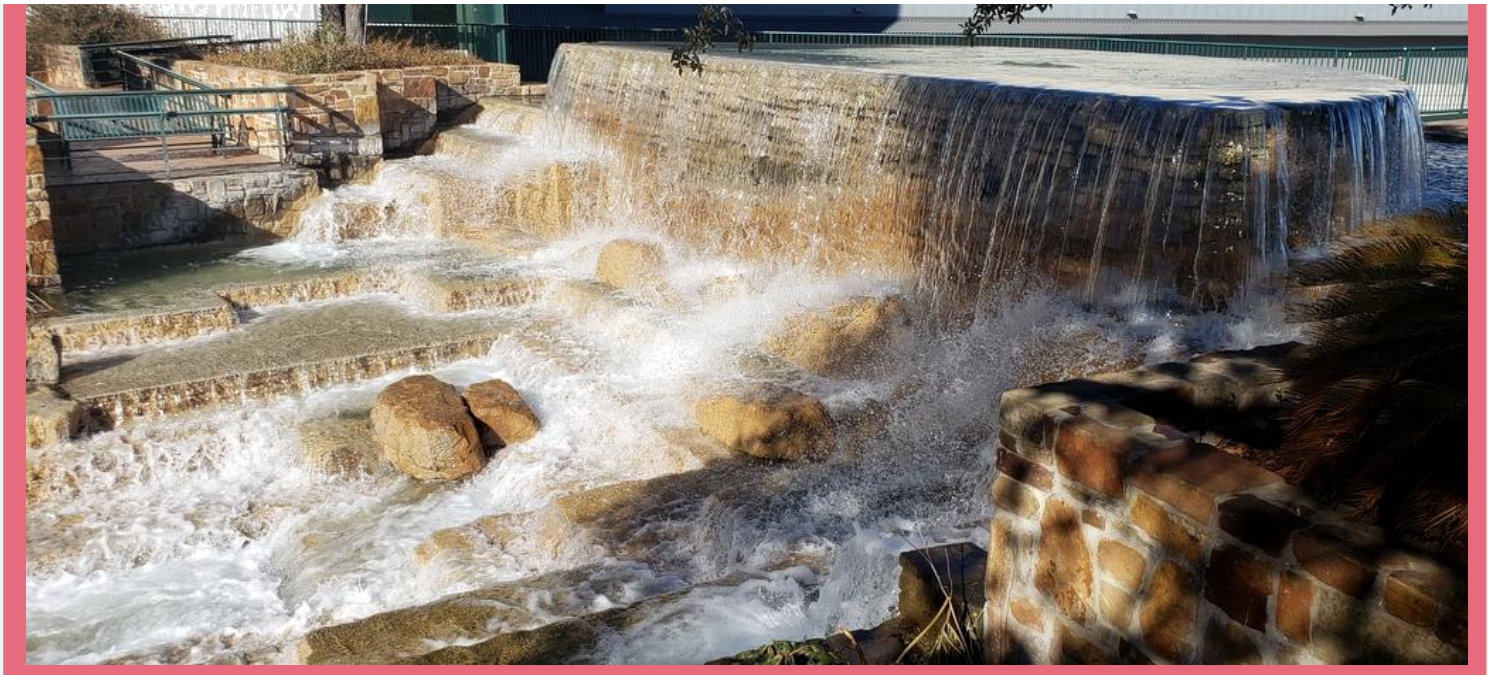
The Tower does not open until 4 p.m. and it was time to head back there. This made it necessary to once again pass through 'The Grotto' on my way back.

I walked over to the kiosk to pay and the girl told me that since no one was there to collect when I arrived I could park for free. Guess where I'll be parking for the next few days (not overnight).

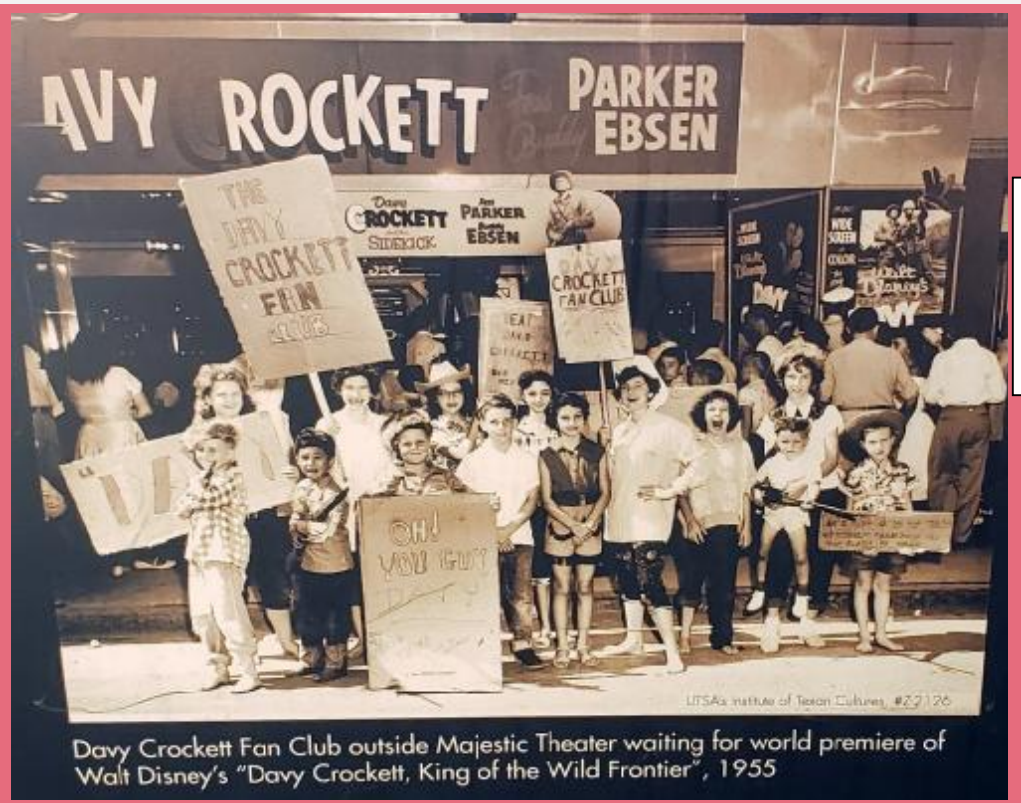
Built in 1968 for the Hemisfair, the Tower of the Americas is 750 feet tall, taller than the Space Needle in Seattle. The bar and restaurant rotate, which I forgot about until just now, darn it, but I wanted to get daytime and evening photos from the same point on the observation deck. I also found a lot of interesting facts and photos. But first, the Hemisfair fountains. Very cool.



This is what dancing fountains look like when there is no water.



Just a quick shot of the Alamo Dome Arena next door.



I don't believe I ever owned a coon skin cap à la Davy Crockett, but I'm willing to bet there are a few of you out there who did.

Davy Crockett Fan Club outside Majestic Theater waiting for world premiere of Walt Disney's "Davy Crockett, King of the Wild Frontier", 1955

Camels in Texas

On May 13, 1856, U.S. Army Major H.C. Wayne came ashore in Texas at Indianola with camels from North Africa. Long known for their ability to carry heavy burdens in desert heat and endure long treks without water or food, the camels were quartered at Camp Verde.

For ten years the Army "Camel Corps" scouted wagon routes across the western deserts, explored the Big Bend country, and served both sides in the Civil War. Finally in 1866, the Army auctioned off all of its camels and gave up on the experiment, largely because the animals smelled bad, were contrary and disagreeable, and frightened the Army's horses terribly.

Those pesky camels just keep popping up every trip don't they? I include this one because of the last sentence. I had not heard that before.

Good old Roy and Trigger.



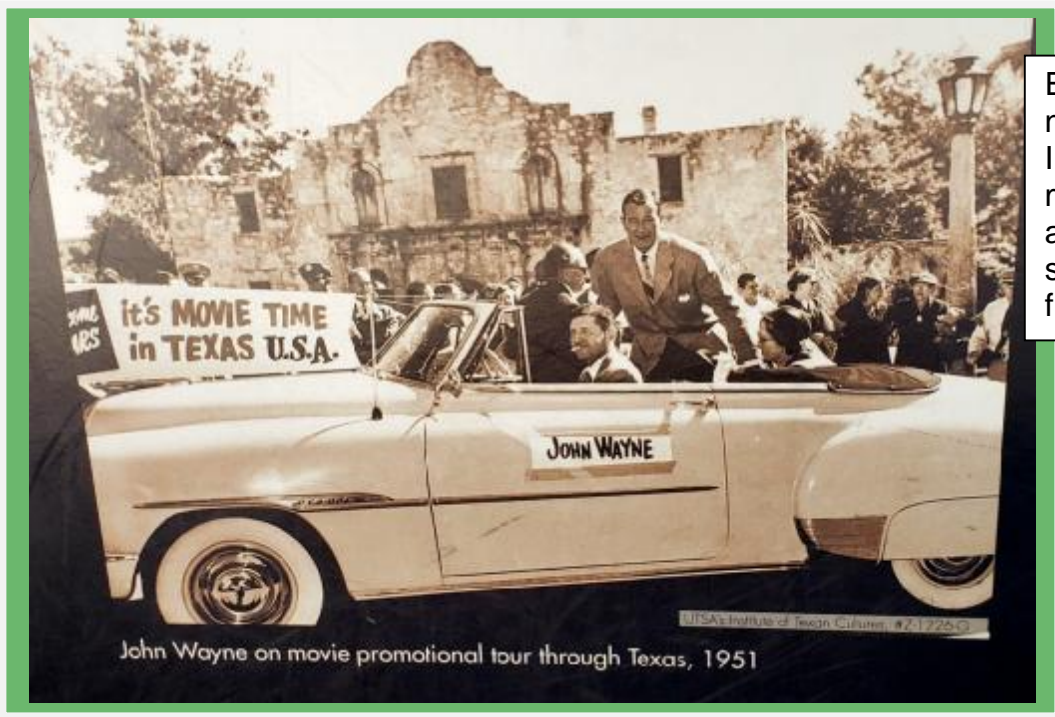
Roy Rogers and Trigger at intersection of St. Mary's and Houston Streets, February 11, 1943

Is it just me, or does this story sound strangely familiar to you too?

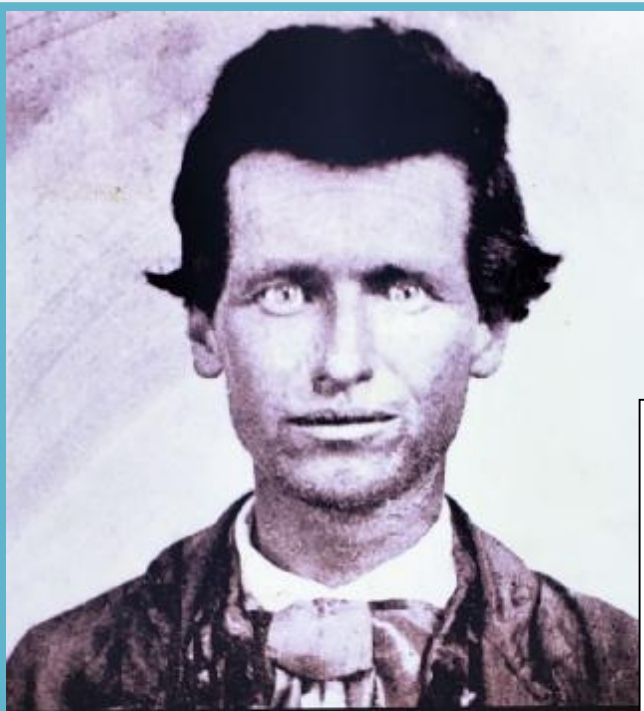
Edmund J. Davis

Perhaps the most hated man in Texas history, E.J. Davis was elected governor under Military Reconstruction. When the Federal troops pulled out of Texas and the first open election since the war was held in 1873, he was soundly defeated.

But Davis did not give up easily. Barricading himself on the ground floor of the capitol with a few Republican militia men, Davis attempted to hold the government while duly elected Governor Coke took the oath of office on the second floor. Only after Davis' second appeal to President Grant for a return of Federal troops was denied did Davis reluctantly give up his office.



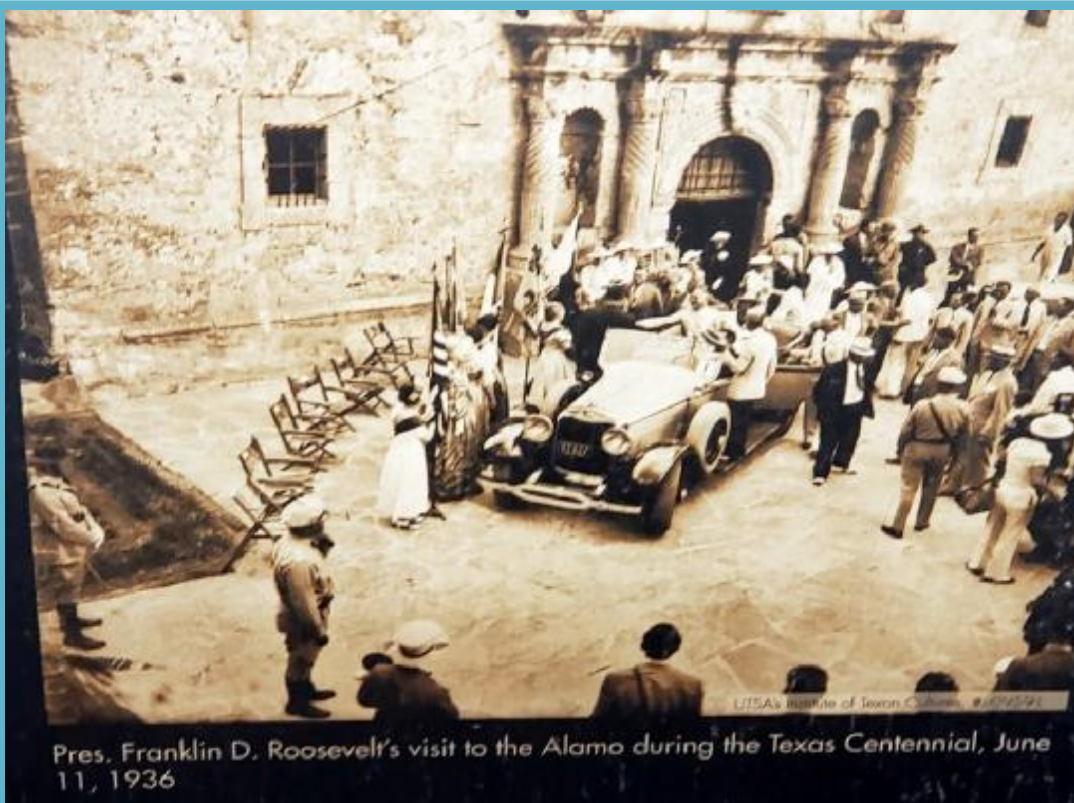
Even though *The Alamo* did not arrive in theaters until 1960 I assume this photo is for that movie. I know it took the Duke a long time to convince a studio to make, and for him to find financing.



I did expect to see more info about Quantrill's Raiders while I was down here, but this is the first time. But hey, that is one scary looking dude is it not? Hmm...I was just looking it up to see if I should add some of the info here, but a search of John Quantrill returns William Quantrill. I can find no info as to why this photo has the name John instead of William. If you can find it, let me know. Anyways, just a note that Frank & Jesse James rode with Quantrill.

John Quantrill's Border Raids

The infamous John Quantrill led his men behind Confederate lines into Texas. His lawlessness proved an embarrassment to the Confederate command, although the Southern generals appreciated his effectiveness against Union forces.

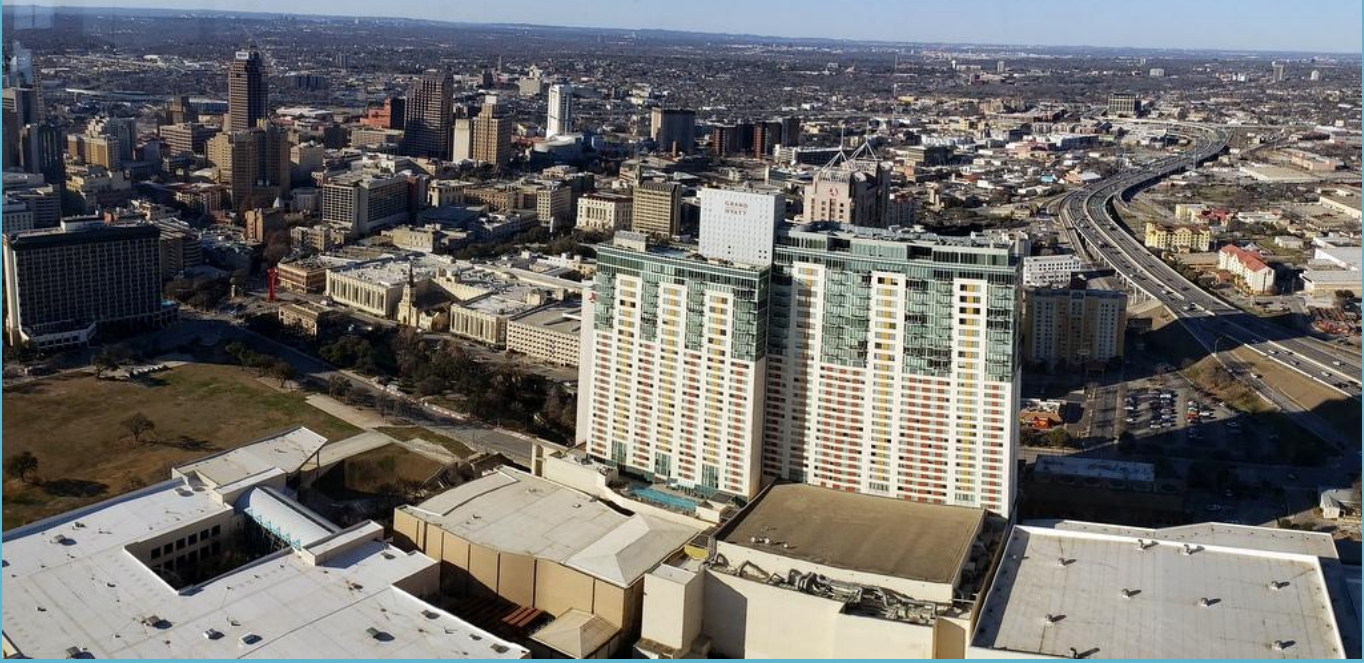


Pres. Franklin D. Roosevelt's visit to the Alamo during the Texas Centennial, June 11, 1936

Not that I ever looked that closely at the Mexican flag, but I found this rather interesting.

The present Mexican flag has changed little from the original of 1821. Its eagle emblem honors the country's indigenous roots. According to legend, the ancient Aztecs wandered to Central Mexico from the north. Their war god advised them to settle where they found an eagle standing on a cactus holding a snake in its beak. The Aztecs encountered this unlikely phenomenon on an island in Lake Texcoco. Here they built their capital of Tenochtitlán (now Mexico City).



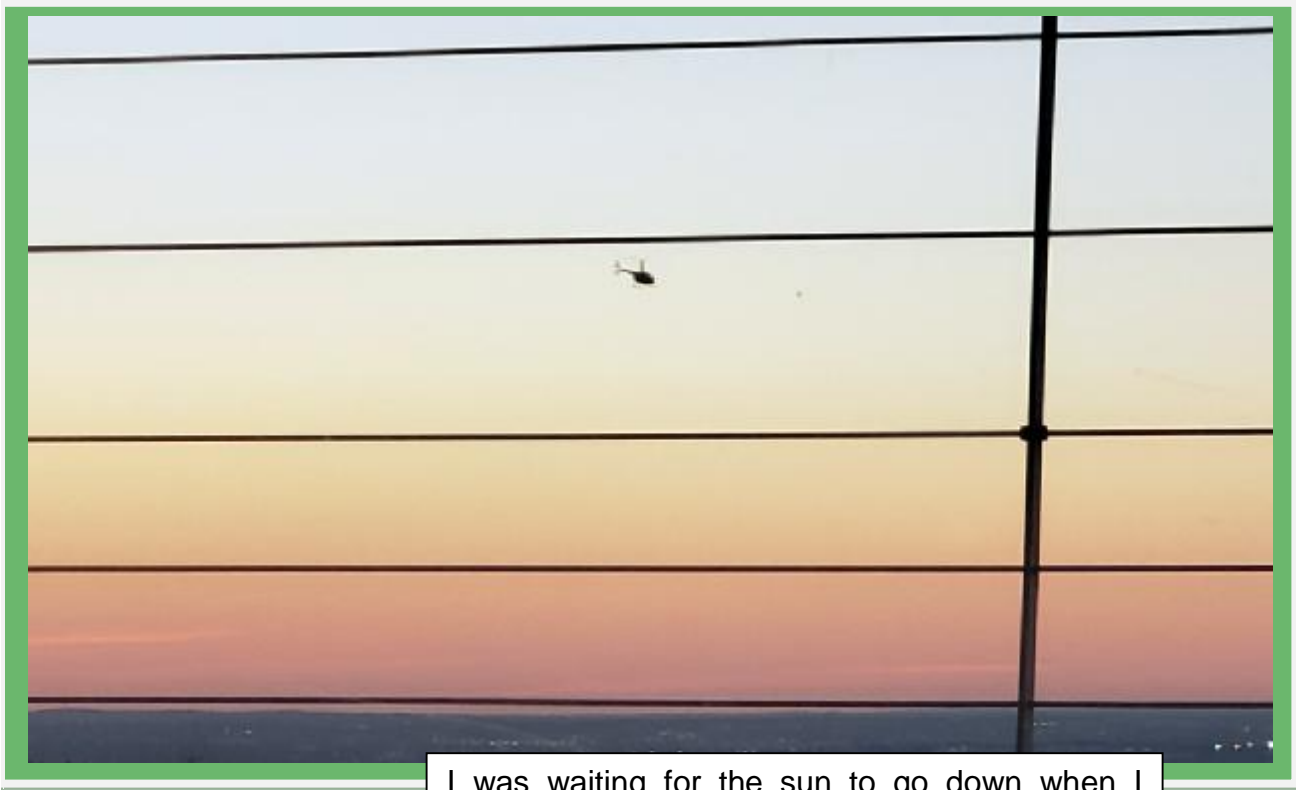


Above – Downtown San Antonio in the daylight from 730 feet up.

Center – How about a little 'Where's Waldo?' Can you find the RV in the parking lot below?

Bottom – Looking south from the tower





I was waiting for the sun to go down when I heard the whomp, whomp, whomp of a helicopter rotor. He was flying away from me by the time I raised the camera. A few minutes later I heard him coming back and was getting pretty close, so I snapped the award winning photo below.





San Antonio at night.

Not quite the Las Vegas strip photos that cousin Al sends me, but not bad.

As I was leaving I caught the fountains once again, this time all lit up..



I told you I was going to get high today, 750 feet high to be exact.

It was a pretty laid back day, a little hiking, a little biking, some beautiful views. Just preparing my mind for museums tomorrow.

I also made a reservation for an Historic Ghost Walk. That should be interesting.

There is a little more Teddy Roosevelt memorabilia in the Menger as well as the bar where he recruited Roughriders. I did not check that out today.

Only one other item to pass on, many of you know it already but today, February 22nd, is my dad's 99th Birthday. I know he reads my newsletters every day. He even brought up some memories from that trip in 1968 when I talked to him last week.

Happy Birthday Dad!!!! Love you!!

Until next time.....